

A.B.C. Capers

—BY—
SOEMPLE



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944 S. Logan St.

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**A Playlet in One Scene for Twenty-eight Children,
Fourteen Boys and Fourteen Girls.**

By SOEMPLE

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**ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,
Franklin, Ohio Denver, Colo.**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Who take part—Tim, a little boy; Drum Major of A-B-C Troupe, a girl; A-C Troupe, A, C, E, G, I, K, M, O, Q, S, U, W, Y, thirteen girls; B, D, F, H, J, L, N, P, R, T, V, X, Z, thirteen boys.

COSTUMES

Tim—like any small boy.

Drum Major—White dress and stockings, no shoes, white tam-o'-shanter; cap and instep of stockings finished off with red pom-poms; five-inch letters of the alphabet cut out of red paper or cloth pasted all over dress and cap; carries a stick wound with white and tipped with red A, at the other end two tiny bells swing.

A, C, E, etc.,—dressed like Drum Major, but no letters pasted on cap or dress; each carries in right hand her own letter of the alphabet, eighteen inches high, cut from cardboard and covered back and front with red paper, two small bells dangling at the bottom. The bells must be so small that they only tinkle faintly.

B, D, F, etc.—White clown suits and stockings, no shoes, white pointed hats; hats and insteps decorated with red pom-poms; each carries his own letter, made like the girls' letters

Stage Setting—A fireplace to the left front corner with a fire in the grate, made of red tissue paper over a light; a low hassock on a rug in front of fireplace; a chair here and there, a table with a lamp, books, magazines, and a workbasket, pushed against one wall, and pictures on the walls. Entrance is to the right.

Time—About half past four in the afternoon.

Place—The TMP 96-006667 own's home.

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(Enter Tim, a big sugar cooky in left hand, a primer or A-B-C book in right. Crosses to fireplace and drops down on hassock, back to the fire. Takes a bite of cooky. Opens book and spreads it out on his knees.)

Tim—Teacher said I should bring my book home and learn my A-B-C's. *(Turns over pages.)* A, B, C, D — *(takes bite of cooky, half shuts book, keeping finger in place)* A, B,—A, B—what's next *(opens book)* O, yes! A, B, C, D, E—I wonder why they have so many A-B-C's. *(Takes a bite of cooky, shuts book as before)* A, B,—B—A, B,—B—C—A, B, C,—C— *(takes a bite of cooky; opens book)* A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H— Why, I believe there's an A-B-C for every boy and girl in Michigan! *(or whatever state he lives in)* I wonder if teacher meant I should learn all of them. I don't believe she did. *(He takes a bite of cooky; closes book as before.)* Well, A— Well, A— A—A— Why, I don't know the A-B-C's I had all learned up! That's queer! *(Takes a bite of cooky.)* I wonder why they didn't stay learned. Maybe they like being in the book better than in my head. Maybe now they do. *(Book falls to floor; Tim muses.)* Wouldn't it be too bad if I learned them out of the book and they didn't want to be learned out of it? *(Takes last bite of cooky.)* I believe I'll just eat a bite of my ginger cooky first, anyway. *(Pulls a big ginger cooky out of his pocket, and begins on that.)* Why, I feel sleepy! That's queer! I wasn't sleepy a little bit ago when I was chasing with Peter Dog. *(Picks up book, yawns, opens it.)* A, B,—C—D—E—F— *(nods, book slips to floor.)* A— B— *(curls down on hassock fast asleep, cooky still in hand.)*

(Enter Drum Major. Tiptoes over to where Tim is asleep. Picks up book, flipping over the pages.)

Drum Major—(muttering) I thought so. I thought so! (Shakes Tim by shoulder; Tim does not rouse.) Oh, ho! Oh, ho! Fast asleep! A boy that can't learn his A-B-C's! A boy that won't learn his A-B-C's! A boy that doesn't like to learn his A-B-C's! Oh, ho! Oh, ho! (Prances about, waving stick jeeringly.) Oh, ho! Oh, ho! (Darts to entrance, puts head out, calling loudly, and as fast as she can say them.) ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ! (Skips back to fire; A-B-C boys and girls rush in, dancing and bobbing up and down, not still a minute. Drum Major points stick at Tim and addresses A-B-C's.) Here's a fine boy! Here's a fine boy! A boy that can't learn his A-B-C's! A boy that won't learn his A-B-C's! A boy that doesn't like to learn his A-B-C's!

A-B-C's—He can't learn us! He won't learn us! He doesn't like to learn us! That's droll! Why, we're lots of fun!

Drum Major—And what good is that? He won't ever know you are lots of fun if he doesn't learn you.

Z—Well, what are you going to do about it? We want him to learn us; don't we?

Rest of A-B-C's—We do!

Drum Major—There! There! That is why I summoned you all hither. I'll just put you through a sample performance of your antics to show this fine boy, this fine boy, what he is missing.

A—We'll show him, won't we?

Rest of A-B-C's—We will!

Drum Major—All right! All right! (Erect, raising stick, and giving orders crisply.) Circus is starting! Roll call! (Pulls a paper out of pocket, unfolds it, and keeps her eyes on it during roll call.) Now! Ready! A.

A—A.

B—B.

C—C. (etc., to Z, each A-B-C calling out his own letter, still on the go.)

Drum Major—(nodding and refolding and returning paper to pocket) All on hand! Good! Good! (Raising stick) Grand march! Fall into step, there! A, B, C, D! (Emphasizing as if saying, "left, right, left, right," takes her place at head of line, beating quick march time with stick. A-B-C's follow, single file and in proper alphabetical order, and go through a brisk, bobbing-up-and-down march around stage, each A-B-C jumping out of line as he passes Tim, and shaking his letter at him.)

A-B-C's and Drum Major—(singing as the march, to tune of "Twenty Froggies," keeping step to tune.)

Us, your A-B-C's, don't spurn,
Study, Tim, until you learn
Each of us, from A to Z—
A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
We're chock full of jollity,
Only learn us and you'll see;
And we're wise as ten wise men—
H, I, J, K, L, M, N.

You can't spell your name, oh, ho!
We know how the letters go,
We will show you when you've said
All of us from A to Zed.
You can't read your heavy mail,
From your daddy far a-sail,
Learn us and we'll skim it through—
O, P, Q, R, S, T, U.

You can't read your story book,
At the pictures you just look;
Why, you hold it upsidedown
Like a funny circus clown!
On its stories you can start,
When you know our names, by heart.
Come! Come learn us with a vim—
V, W, X, Y, Z. Come, Tim!

Drum Major—Enough! Enough! Into your places! (D. M. skips to position at Tim's far side. A-B-C's form half-circle around back and right of stage, center of line opposite Tim. The A-B-C's perform in center of stage, turned facing Tim. The audience must be able to see them also.) First performance! (Raises stick.) T! (T skips forward.) I! (I skips beside T.) M! (M skips beside I.) B! (B skips forward in line with T, I, and M, but a space away from M.) R! (R skips beside B.) O! O skips beside R; W skips expectantly two or three steps forward out of half circle) Back, W. Didn't I say these were to be only sample antics? You wouldn't spell the boy's whole name for him, would you? He must learn to do that for himself. (W skips backward into place. Drum Major signals with stick and then beats time.) Now! All together!

T, I, M, B, R and O—(tripping back and forth two sidewise steps, keeping in same formation, sing-songily)

T, I, M,
 B, R, O,
 What we spell
 You don't know.
 Hist! We started
 Out to spell
 Some boy's name—
 We won't tell.
 T, I, M,
 B, R, O,
 What comes next
 You don't know.
 Don't know which of us
 To call.
 You can't spell your name
 At all.
 T, I, M,
 B, R, O,
 Learn us
 If you want to know.

D. M.—(*raising stick*) Enough! Enough! Back to your places! First performance is over. (*T, I, M, B, R and O bow and skip backward to places in half-circle*) Second performance! *D!* (*D skips forward.*) *E!* (*E skips beside D; same for A, R, T, I, and M, who stand in line, leaving a space between DEAR and TIM; D. M. signals with stick and beats time.*) Now, all together!

D, E, A, R, T, I, and M—(*tripping back and forth, two sidewise steps, sing-songily:*)

D, E, A, R, T, I, M—

Frown and make believe—ahem!—

Whist! We'll read *that* much for you;

"Dear Tim," now you're eager, to

Know what's in the letter, ha!

And who signed it, "From your fa—"

(*clap hands over their mouths.*)

Sh! Sh! Sh! We mustn't tell,

Tim, himself, must learn to spell.

Come, Tim Brown, you'll soon know how,

If you learn your letters now.

D. M.—(*raising stick*) Enough! Enough! Back to your places! Second performance is over! (*D, E, A, R, T, I and M bow and skip backward to places in half-circle.*) Third performance! *O!* (*O skips out.*) *N!* (*N skips out beside O; same for C, E, U, P, O, N, T, I, M, and E, who form a line, leaving space between ONCE and UPON, UPON and A and A and TIME; when a letter is repeated, as O in UPON, O in ONCE, takes a backward skip out of the line, then skips along back of other letters to new place assigned; H expectantly skips forward a few steps out of half-circle.*) Back, *H!* Didn't I say and haven't I repeated these were to be only sample antics? You wouldn't tell Tim the whole story, would you? Tim must learn to read it for himself. (*H skips backward into place; D. M. signals with stick and beats time.*) Now, all together!

*O, N, C, E, U, P, A, T, I, and M—(tripping back
and forth two sidewise steps sing-songily.)*

Just

Once up a time,

Once up a time,

Once up a time,

Indeed

We'll not a further word,

We'll not a further word,

We'll not a further word,

To you read!

For

Boys must learn to read,

Boys must learn to read,

Boys must learn to read,

Themselves

All the fairies' tales,

All the fairies' tales,

All the fairies' tales,

And elves'.

Because

We've not the time,

We've not the time,

We've not the time,

To read

To all the boys and girls,

To all the boys and girls,

To all the boys and girls,

That plead.

So

Once up a time,

Once up a time,

Once up a time,

There—Sh! Hist!

Tim must read the tale himself,

Must read the tale himself;

Once up a time,

There was—Sh! Whist!

D. M.—(raising stick) Enough! Enough! Back to your places! Third performance is over! (Letters bow and skip backward to places in half-circle.) Fourth and last performance! C! (C skips out.) F! (F skips out, but not next to C; same for all A-B-C's that have not taken part in other performances; they do not stand in line nor remain in any given place, hopping about; bobbing up and down, turning somersaults, standing on their heads, whirling one another around, sometimes putting CH together or SW, as if about to make a word, continually doing something and always something different.) Now, all together! (D. M. signals with stick and beats time.)

C, F, G, H, J, K, L, Q, S, V, W, X, Y and Z—(sing-songily)

Higgledy-piggledy,
Here's a fix!
Hit and miss,
We're at our tricks.

You must learn
To sort us out,
If you'd know
What we're about.

Puzzle out
The mystery,
Join in our
Hilarity.

Learn your A-B-C's,
Tim Brown;
Say us up,
And say us down.

Learn us,
If you want to take
Part in all the fun
We make.

Learn us,
Learn your A-B-C's,
Then our antics
Will not tease.

D. M.—(*raising stick*) Enough! Enough! Back to your places! (*Letters bow and skip to places in half-circle.*) Grand march! Fall into step, there! A, B, C, D! (*Takes her place at head of line, beating quick march time; A-B-C's follow in alphabetical order and march once around stage as before.*)

A-B-C's and D. M.—(*singing as they march, to tune of "Twenty Froggies," and keeping step to tune.*)

Ho, Tim Brown, Tim Brown, good-by!
Five o'clock and we must fly
To our places in your book,
That a moment we forsook,
Just to let you taste, no more,
Joys the future holds in store,
If you learn us, A to Z,
Ho, Tim Brown, Tim Brown—Sh! Flee!

(*Tim stirs at his name; with word "flee" A-B-C's break line and rush pell-mell to entrance; D. M., half across stage, stops, raises stick, speaks in low voice but sharply.*)

D. M.—Hold on there! (*A-B-C's halt just within entrance, ready to flee if Tim wakes up. D. M. watches Tim; a pause of a moment or two; Tim does not stir again.*) Roll call! (*Pulls paper out of pocket, one eye on it during roll call, one on Tim.*) Now! Ready!

A—A!

B—B!

C—C! (*and so on, through alphabet, each A-B-C calling out his own letter in a loud whisper; at Z Tim stretches and A-B-C's tumble over each other to get out, D. M. at their heels, whispering loudly, "Circus is over for today!" Z sprawls on the floor and D. M. pulls him*

out by the leg. Tim sits up, rubs his eyes, blinks and stares around.)

Tim—Aw, they're gone! Now, I sha'n't ever know how to spell the rest of my name, nor what Daddy said in his letter after "Dear Tim," nor what the Once-upon-a-time-there-was story was going to be about, nor how to put the higgledy-piggledy A-B-C's together! (*Spies his book on the floor, drops his cooky, claps his hands, and reaches for the book.*) Oh! Oh! The A-B-C's aren't gone! They said they were going back to their places in my book! And here they are! (*Turns over pages.*) A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H-I— Just like they marched! And they said they like to be learned out of the book, they want me to learn them out of the book! Oh, they're easy to learn! (*Shuts book.*) A-B-C-D-E— I'll soon know them all! And then what fun I'm going to have with them, spelling words and reading letters and stories and unjumbling jumbles and lots of exciting things! What fun! E-F-G-H-I—

CURTAIN



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